

HOW TO WORK WITH SOUND IN YOUR YOGA PRACTICE

Yogis have used sound for thousands of years because they understood the importance and effectiveness of that tool. Sound affects us on several levels:

- **COGNITIVE:** It means something. You hear a nursery rhyme and you understand what it means. But the same rhyme might also bring up images from your childhood, certain experiences, feelings – and those associations will be uniquely yours.
- **INHERENT:** In yoga it is believed that certain sounds have inherent meaning on the level of symbol and vibration, whether or not you understand it consciously. For example, in many cultures the syllable “MA” is associated with ‘mother’.
- **ENERGETIC:** Would your perception of what I said change if I said **IT REALLY LOUD** and then said it **v e r y s l o w l y**? How about higher pitch and lower pitch? That is the energetic effect of sound.

If you choose to use sound in your yoga practice, you can structure it to communicate a certain cognitive meaning (For example, repeating “Let go, let go, let go” on the Exhalation will help you to ... let go). Or you might chose to integrate a certain mantra (*mantra* is a syllable that doesn’t have discursive meaning, but is believed to capture the essence, the vibration of the object/symbol/deity). Or you might decide to use sound volume to produce an energetic effect (using the Brhmana/ Langhana model)

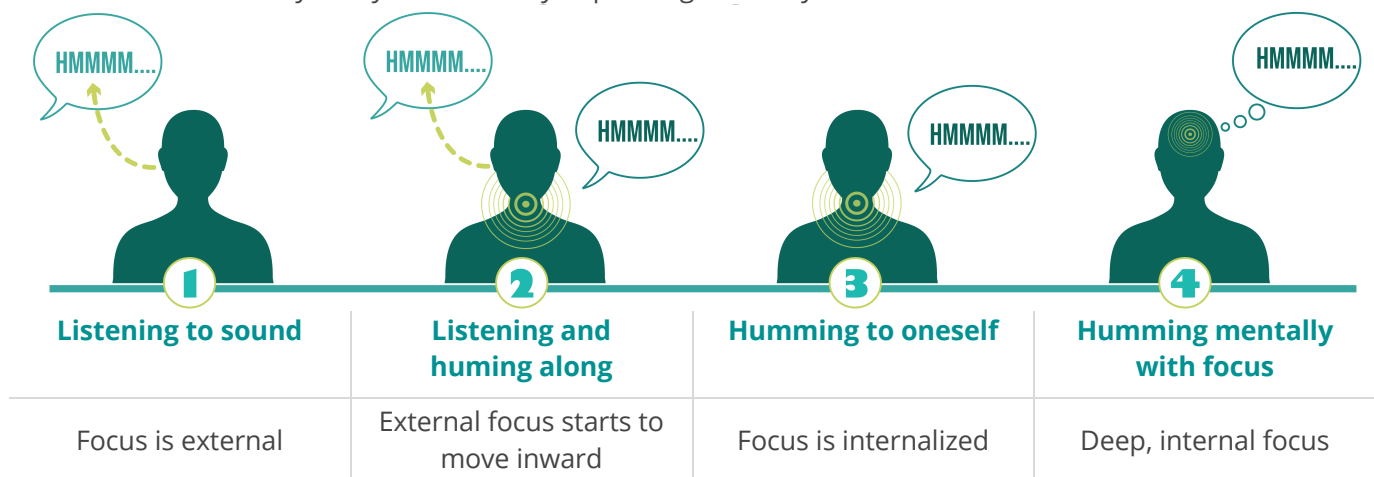


When it comes to sound, two qualities define whether it will have a brhmana (building, nourishing) or langhana (eliminating, sedating) effect – *svara* (pitch) and *balam* (strength).

Svara: Lower pitch sounds will have more pronounced langhana effect and higher pitch sounds will have a more brhmana effect. However, if the pitch is too high or too low it will produce agitation.

Balam: The stronger the sound (including volume), the more brhmana effect it will have. Softer sounds have more langhana effect.

The effect of sound on your system will vary depending on how you work with it.



When we chant in yoga we usually follow the same steps: 1. Teacher chants. 2. Students chant with the teacher. 3. Students chant on their own. 4. Students chant mentally to make the sound vibrate in the mind alone. Since a big part of a yoga practice is moving from a more gross manifestation of things to a more subtle experience, working with sound gives us an opportunity to manifest that movement.